

WOODROW WILSON REHABILITATION CENTER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	
Title: <b>STAFF/CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS</b>	
Policy Number: <b>2.08</b>	
Effective Date: <b>8/1/98</b>	Page <b>1</b> of <b>2</b>
Lead Department: <b>ETHICS COMMITTEE</b>	

## **OBJECTIVE**

To assure effective professional standards and relationships, and to maintain services without conflict of interest, improper disclosure of confidential information, or ethical boundary violations among staff (classified, wage or contract individuals at WWRC), other service providers, clients, family members, and guests.

## **POLICY**

Clients are to be treated with respect and dignity. Staff will not be involved in friendships, intimate relationships, or show favoritism toward clients because such behaviors constitute boundary violations that are detrimental to treatment objectivity and a positive rehabilitation environment. This policy applies while the client is enrolled at WWRC and/or is a client of the Department of Rehabilitative Services. For those staff whose professional standards of conduct require a more stringent practice, that standard shall be maintained.

The following behaviors are considered unprofessional and unethical, and are therefore prohibited:

1. Staff are prohibited from developing relationships with clients that are not considered professional and therapeutic. Staff are prohibited from engaging in personal and/or intimate relationships with clients. Dating, as well as sexual activities, between staff and clients are prohibited.
  - a. Special concerns arise when family members, friends, or other intimates are clients. If a staff member has a prior relationship with a client, it is the staff member's duty to inform the supervisor and the case manager of the relationship. The case manager is responsible for informing the treatment team. A staff member with such a prior relationship should not be a member of the treatment team. However, if the staff member has personal care responsibilities for the client, the staff member may participate in team meetings and family education with the client's and rehabilitation team's permission.
  - b. When friends, significant others, or family members receive services at WWRC, staff will refrain from social contact during work hours, unless indicated as necessary or therapeutic by the client's treatment plan. During staff lunch breaks, there are no stipulations as to how the staff spends that time; however, discretion should be used when socializing with these clients who are family members, friends or other intimates so as not to portray favoritism. The client's treatment team will determine the plan in order to ensure the highest quality care.

- c. When a staff member's friend or family member has a personal relationship with a current or former client, this relationship must be disclosed to the staff person's supervisor so that all future professional interactions can be transferred to another staff person.
2. Abuse/neglect of any kind is prohibited. This includes physical, sexual, psychological and/or verbal.
3. Financial relations: Staff are prohibited from buying, selling or giving merchandise, goods, services or property to and/or from clients. Staff may not borrow or lend money or items of value to and/or from clients nor give gifts to clients. Staff are not to trade, barter, or contract with clients for personal or business services or for property.
4. Gift Receiving: It is generally not acceptable to receive gifts of material value from clients or their families. If a staff member receives a gift from a client or family, the staff member's supervisor must be notified to determine whether the gift should be returned to the family or other action taken. (Example – tray of cookies brought to unit by family member – supervisor may accept; taking all staff members to lunch as a thank you - not acceptable. In all cases, the receipt of money from a client or a client's family is prohibited. If this occurs, the staff member will notify supervisor and an acknowledgement of the gift must be made with a notation that the gift is being forwarded to the Foundation for handling.)
5. Staff are not to share or compare personal life issues, stories, concerns, and/or problems with clients unless there is clear therapeutic or instructional intent that recognizes and respects the boundary between Center staff and clients at all times.
6. Staff shall not disclose information that is confidential, personal, or private with any consumer as it relates to business practices, staff members and/or other clients.
7. Staff shall be cautious to realize that dual relationships with clients may emerge through various modes of communication (email, instant messaging, phone contact, paper correspondence, Internet). Staff shall avoid including clients on email postings, MySpace, Facebook, etc.
8. Alcohol, illegal drugs, and/or weapons are prohibited at the Center and/or at Center organized activities away from the Center. Supplying, sharing, or facilitating the acquisition of alcohol, drugs, or weapons for a client is prohibited. \*\*Drug Free School Zone Laws & Regulations will be strictly enforced.
9. Assisting clients in violation of law, DRS/WWRC Policy & Procedures, rules, and/or regulations is prohibited.

Violations of this policy will be addressed through the appropriate disciplinary procedure. The Ethics Service is available for consultation should there be a question or misunderstanding of policy interpretation.

Revised 9/99, 3/00, 3/02, 6/02, 8/03, 1/05, 9/06, 3/07  
Reviewed 12/03